

The Newark Human Rights Commission was established under the administration of Leo Carlin on October 15, 1952. This was the first to be set up in the United States. At that time it was known as the Mayor's Group on Interrelations. This was changed to the current title in 1962. The purpose of the commission:

To provide an instrumentality through which the City may officially encourage and bring about mutual understanding and respect by all groups in the City, eliminate prejudice, intolerance, bigotry, discrimination and disorder and help give effect to the guarantee of equal rights for all as assured by the Constitution and Laws of the state.

The commission has concentrated in the area of employment, both public and private, housing discrimination and improving relations between community residents and civil authorities such as police and fire departments. The activities of the commission has concentrated on the needs of blacks, Hispanics and youth. More recently it has broadened its works to include the handicapped, aged persons and women.

Some of the most meaningful work has been in the field of publishing. The commission has conducted extensive research into the causes of discrimination and economic deprivation. Its publications have been invaluable to researcher and city planner.

The commission has sought since its inception to augment its powers. Early in the 1960's it requested from the municipal government the legal authority to function as an investigatory agency and advisory board. More recently it has been empowered to enforce the city's antiblocking housing ordinance.